

November 5, 2012

TO: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Environment, and Great Lakes

RE: Written Comments for November 8 Hearing

I am a lifelong resident of the Upper Peninsula as well as a business owner. I urge you to vote NO on Senate Bill 1350.

I grew up on a farm, in a family that included hunters who hunted only what would end up on the dinner table, namely deer and grouse. There were no wolves in the U.P. in the 60s and 70s, and I recall the regret expressed by the adults in our family that wolves had been eradicated from the region.

As a sled dog musher, I first encountered wolves in the Central Upper Peninsula during a training run in the mid-1990s. My six-dog team and I faced two wolves running in the opposite direction, on a parallel trail beside a railroad grade. They ran past our team with barely a glance our way. I have come to learn that this is typical wolf behavior. That same winter, when my six-dog team and I were in a sled dog race in Alger County, a wolf stood beside the trail a couple hundred feet in the distance, then turned and ran away. In the early 2000s my husband and I repeatedly saw wolf tracks and sign near our home, where more than 20 dogs reside. On two occasions, wolf tracks appeared behind our pen housing puppies; however, the wolves made no effort to penetrate the six-foot high welded wire fence.

In April 2002 I encountered a wolf near our Marquette-area home, adjacent to thousands of acres of forested corporate and State lands. The wolf, perhaps 200 feet from my leashed dog and me, sprinted away at the sound of my voice. A week later, a second wolf chased a snowshoe hare across the county road, no more than 30 feet in front of me and my leashed dog. It simply stopped and looked at us for about 10 seconds, then continued pursuing the hare.

Neither my husband nor I have ever once felt threatened by wolves. The wolves have never threatened our dogs. The key is being aware of their presence and taking care of one's animals by being a responsible pet owner and taking reasonable precautions: dogs need to be leashed and under the owner's control. Animals need to be fenced. People need to refrain from letting dogs run loose in wolf territory.

We own a sled dog touring business. We have hosted many visitors from near and afar. They are excited to hear about our region's wild animals—none more than wolves. They have enjoyed seeing wolf tracks in the snow and finding territorial markings.

Michigan law in effect since January 2012 allows livestock owners and dog owners to kill wolves displaying threatening behavior. Livestock owners have been issued landowner permits. There is no scientific need to hunt wolves. The Upper Peninsula of Michigan is ideal wolf habitat, and wolves fulfill an important role in the environment.

Wolves attract tourists and wildlife watchers; this has been big business in areas like Yellowstone and small towns like Ely, Minnesota, and could be for Michigan. Photos of wolves slaughtered in the Wisconsin and Minnesota wolf hunts are being flaunted and celebrated by some, but to most people, they are tragic, shocking, and disgusting.

Through education it is possible for producers and land owners to coexist with wolves. By continuing to respect and value the wolf, and by refraining from hunting them, Michigan will continue to be seen in a positive light by wildlife-watching tourists as well as the vast majority of people who live in Michigan, including the Upper Peninsula.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Winkowski